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Fourteenth Meeting, June 25th, 1860.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, VICE-PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

PRESENTATIONS.—*Isidore Gerstenberg; Arthur Giles Puller; and Augustus Henry Smith, Esqrs., were presented upon their Election.*

ELECTIONS.—*Commander Charles E. Forbes, R.N.; the Rev. Cosmo Reid Gordon; Captain Samuel Hyde; and Henry James Dunell; Francis Thomas Gregory; Thomas Longridge Gooch, C.E.; Herbert Ingram, M.P.; William Crichton Maclean; John Septimus Roe, Surveyor-General, Western Australia; Henry Brinsley Sheridan, M.P.; James Lowther Southey; James Watson; Thomas Matthias Weguelin; and Thomas Wilson, Esqrs., were elected Fellows.*

Captain the Hon. H. A. MURRAY, R.N., F.R.G.S., read the following letter from Consul Petherick on the subject of his proposed offer to proceed southwards from Khartum, in order to meet and assist the expedition under Captains Speke and Grant:—

8, Cork-street, June 19th, 1860.

MY LORD,—In consequence of the refusal of Her Majesty's Government to support the application for pecuniary assistance made on my behalf by the Royal Geographical Society, for the purpose of enabling me to meet Captains Speke and Grant with an armed escort, and to furnish them and their party with provisions and the means of transport down the Nile, and the Council having liberally headed a subscription with 100*l.*, to which your Lordship has invited the Fellows of the Society to add their names, a few remarks upon the following two subjects will not be out of place:—

1st. The nature of the assistance I should propose to give Captains Speke and Grant to contribute to their safe return down the Nile, and the expenses thereof.

2nd. The probable expense of an independent Expedition from Khartum to follow up the course of the Nile to its source, in combination with the aid to Captains Speke and Grant, as stated above.

In order to afford the greatest possible assistance to the Expedition of Captains Speke and Grant, I consider it necessary to place three well-provisioned boats, under an escort of twenty armed men, at the base of the cataracts beyond Gondokoro, in the month of November, 1861.

With forty armed men, natives of Khartum or the adjoining provinces, I then would undertake personally to penetrate into the interior as far as the Lake Nyanza, with a view to effect a meeting

with the Expedition and assist it through the hostile tribes between the Lake and the Nile, and return thence by the boats to Khartum.

Should I be unsuccessful in meeting with the Expedition, I would then endeavour to establish beyond a doubt whether or no there was any connection between the Lake and the Nile.

If it should be considered desirable, and my means were sufficient, I would proceed along the western shore of the Lake to the extreme point of Captain Speke's late discovery, so as to connect, by a series of observations, North with South Africa; after which, having met the Expedition or not, I should return to my boats at the cataracts and thence to Khartum.

I believe that, with the facilities at my command in the shape of boats and arms, the expense of such an expedition would amount to about 2000*l.*

In the event of so large a sum not being available, I would then propose to place two well-provisioned and armed boats, under the superintendence of one of my own men, on whose integrity I could confidently depend, to await the arrival of the Expedition at the above-named cataracts from November, 1861, until June, 1862.

This precaution I consider most important to the success of Captains Speke and Grant, and the expense would be, on a moderate calculation, 1000*l.*

Sixteen years' experience on the Nile, and the brilliant examples of illustrious countrymen, have created in me the desire and ambition, that by placing my experience at the service of the Royal Geographical Society, I may aspire to the proud eminence of adding to British glory by assisting in the discovery of the sources of the Nile.

Single-handed, unfortunately, I have not the means to achieve it, other important interests compelling me to devote my attention to regions which I have had the honour to make known to the Society; but if so far in the enjoyment of the confidence of the Royal Geographical Society and the nation, as to obtain sufficient support, I feel *that* in me, which will command success.

It strikes me forcibly that the most feasible method of accomplishing the object above stated, is to follow the stream.

For this purpose I would supply myself with a boat, either by taking out one in parts from this country, or by constructing one on the spot; the materials for which, with the exception of timber,—that being abundant in the locality—I would take with me, as well as also artisans from Khartum.

The men and materials I would endeavour to place above the cataracts early in 1861, so that in November of the same year,

with the setting in of the north wind, I should be in a position to navigate the unknown Upper Nile ; and during the same season—I should hope to arrive at its extreme navigable point, where it would be necessary, in order to keep up my communications, to establish a station.

During the rainy season, if the course of the stream continued from the south, the prevailing south wind would prevent farther navigation during the inundation ; but if it proceeded from the west or east—which latter I think probable—it might offer no impediment to the sailing of my boat, and I might continue my explorations.

Should the stream continue running from a northerly direction, the heavy rains would, I fear, prevent my following it by land until September or October, 1862 ; and it would probably require the whole of the ensuing dry season until February, 1863, to secure the object of the Expedition, when, God willing, the flood would bring me down the river to the cataracts of Gondokoro, and thence via Khartum, home to England.

Such an expedition would involve boats on the White Nile from Khartum to Gondokoro ; one or two, probably a larger and a smaller one, on the Upper Nile above the cataracts of Gondokoro ; and two establishments—one above the said cataracts, and the other at the extreme navigable point of the stream, in order to keep up my communications for all necessary supplies.

An undertaking to ensure the accomplishment of so glorious an object, if put before the nation under the influential and powerful patronage of the Royal Geographical Society, would, I would fain hope, be eventually carried out ; and when it is considered that the proposed expedition might be effected with the double object of independent discovery and of rendering the assistance to Captains Speke and Grant, by supplying them with provisions and transport on their way down the Nile without any increased expense, I believe that in consigning the proposition to the able hands of your Lordship, the mystery that for ages has attached itself to the sources of the Nile is doomed to give way before the powerful influence and unflinching enterprise of Great Britain.

Having placed my opinions before your Lordship, I have the honour to subscribe myself

Your Lordship's most humble and obedient servant,

JOHN PETHERICK, F.R.G.S.

*The Right Hon. Lord Ashburton,
President of the Royal Geographical Society, etc.*

The CHAIRMAN said that he was sure they would all participate in the sentiments which Mr. Petherick had so forcibly, succinctly, and ably expressed. Every geographer who had turned his attention to the subject of the discovery of the Sources of the Nile, well knew the difficulties that would attend the explorations of Captains Speke and Grant, when they arrived at the north end of Lake Nyanza, and in reaching those portions of the Nile to which no traveller of any nation had as yet ever penetrated. It was in order to render assistance to these gallant men in this the most difficult portion of their journey, where they would have to pass through a country inhabited by hostile and dangerous tribes, that Mr. Petherick had offered his services. He was willing to abandon his other occupations and to give up his time to meet his fellow-countrymen in this region of the interior. He had only to repeat the expression of his admiration of the proposal, and he did most earnestly hope that British geographers would, by their subscriptions, support this noble enterprise.

The Papers read were :—

1. *Journey to Fort Simpson, Queen Charlotte Islands.* By Captain R. W. TORRENS.

Communicated by the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE, F.R.G.S., H. M. Secretary for the Colonies.

THE country through which the Nass River flows, like the whole north-west coast of British Columbia, is one long-continued formation of slate, with frequent veins of crystallized quartz. Immense mountains rise on either side, whose summits are covered with eternal snows, and under one of these our first camp upon the Nass was pitched.

From the third Indian village (8th day) upwards, the character of the country changes.

Evidences of volcanic action at some remote period are manifested in the blistered and discoloured appearance of the rocks; frequent veins of decomposed quartz occur, and bars of slateic boulders, covered with a slimy vegetation, supersede the shifting gravel bars of the lower river.

The miners agreed in saying that the geological formation of this district was as auriferous in indications as any they had ever seen, and they were very sanguine of results.

At 110 miles from Fort Simpson we came to a point where the river takes a rectangular turn, falling at the rate of from 10 to 12 feet per mile. Its waters are hurled furiously through the cañon, forming below the angle a whirlpool some 300 feet in circumference. Upon its outer edge, and at intervals of a few moments, the waters boil up from beneath as from a cauldron, raising the level of the current several feet, and then bursting with a fury that carries everything before it.